THE WAY OF
PEACE AND BLESSEDNESS

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BY

SWAMI PARAMANANDA

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PREFACE

LIKE "The Path of Devotion" by the same author, the present volume is made up in chief measure of extracts from letters; hence the living, personal note that sounds through its pages. According to Vedanta, religion is always an individual problem and the truest method of transmitting it the individual method. It must be a direct call from the wise and loving heart of the Teacher to the questioning heart of the disciple, the immediate quickening of the letter by the spirit. The great Vedic Scriptures are nothing more: a mighty Seer of Truth sitting in the shaded seclusion of an Himâlayan forest, passing

on to some eager, inquiring student the fruits of his realization. And wherever this note is heard, whether in the eternal word of a Scripture or in the admonitions of a simple letter, it cannot fail to stir to new life the spiritual consciousness.

The Way of Peace and Blessedness must ever be the way of consecrated service to a lofty Ideal, through unwavering trust, purity of heart and steadfast devotion. To follow it, one must rouse the soul from its slumber of ignorance or indifference and make it feel the reality of God and the spiritual life; one must learn how to worship Truth and gain the Divine vision, how to love and work unselfishly and prayerfully. These are the lessons taught in these pages, lessons too potent and precious to be kept for one only; so they have been

gathered up into this little book, which is now sent forth with its holy message in the earnest hope that through it many may find peace and blessing.

DEVAMATA

BOSTON, June 19, 1913.

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PRAYER

O Infinite Being! O Supreme Lord!
Teach us how to pray and how to meditate.
Make our thoughts so one-pointed, deep and unwavering that they may penetrate the inner depths of our being and perceive Thee.
Lift our mind to that plane where there is no heaviness, where there is no darkness, but only illumination and bliss.
Lead us from delusion to the Light of Wisdom.
Grant that we may feel Thy Divine Presence within us;
That our soul may awaken from the sense-slumber of unreality and be ready to hear Thy call;
That our heart may be full of tolerance and compassion;
That peace and tranquillity may pervade our whole being.
May Thy peace and blessing abide with us and protect us from all unworthy thoughts and actions.
Peace! Peace! Peace be upon all living beings.

WORSHIP OF TRUTH

The True prevails, not the untrue, by the True the path is laid out, the way of the Bright Ones, on which the old sages, satisfied in their desires, proceed to where there is that highest Place of the True One.

That (the Absolute Truth) shines forth grand, divine, inconceivable. It is hidden in the cave (of the heart) among those who see It even here.

MUNDAKA-UPANISHAD

The Truth is a living power for Good, indestructible and invincible. Those who fail to aspire for the Truth have missed the purpose of life. Hold fast to the Truth as a lamp. Seek salvation alone in Truth. Where self is, Truth cannot be; yet when Truth comes, self will disappear. Therefore let thy mind rest in the Truth, propagate the Truth, put thy whole will in it and let it spread. In the Truth thou shalt live forever. Self is death and Truth is life. Trust in the Truth. Have faith in the Truth and live it. BUDDHA

That Brahman (Absolute Truth) is bliss itself; on attaining this, the soul feels happy.

TAITTIRIYA-UPANISHAD

I

WORSHIP OF TRUTH

PRAYER

THROUGH the blessings of the Supreme, may our life be fruitful.
May we be strong and steady.
May our devotion to Truth be unflinching.
May our mind be free from untruth.
May we ever contemplate the Truth.
May our whole life be for the realization of Truth.
May all deluding things drop from our hearts.
May our love of God be over and above all other love.

May our intelligence be so discriminative that nothing may ever delude or deceive us and may we always remain true to God.

May we serve God alone with our whole heart and soul.

May we recognize Him as our only Master. May we worship Him and not the things which lead to darkness.

May He protect us, for there is none but He who can protect us.

May He grant unto us His peace and blessings.

Peace! Peace! Peace!

TRUTH alone remains. Truth alone conquers. Those who worship the Truth, to them alone comes bliss, not to others. Let us make Truth the foundation of our life. Let us strive to know the

Truth. Let all our inspiration come from Truth; and may we surrender to Truth alone, never to untruth. May everything inspire us to acquire Truth. Let nothing discourage us. Let all our life be sanctified by our devotion to Truth.

Truth alone can bring ultimate satisfaction to our souls. They who stand by the Truth, even at the cost of discomfort and sacrifice to their physical nature, they only are true worshippers of God. They alone attain Truth.

Not a particle of Truth can ever be lost. Not a single effort to realize the Truth can ever be unfruitful. The only thing required of us is to have patience, perseverance and unshaken trust in the Divine. What else is needed? Life should be lived just for the sake

of Truth; I mean, for expansion, for vision of It, but never for the opinion of any creature, rich or poor, learned or ignorant. Truth makes one bold. When we do not know, we doubt, we hesitate, we lack conviction in our words and actions. But not he who knows. His only thought, his only aim is to give the Truth and to live the Truth. That is the reason why the sages spoke so boldly. Worship of Truth always brings strength of conviction and absolute fearlessness.

When one worships Truth, there is no more darkness, no more limitation. But we must go step by step. We cannot behold the glory, we cannot get the vision, until we have unfolded. What we need is stability, firmness and loyalty, — loyalty to ourselves. When we are true to ourself, then we are true

to our Ideal, true to life, true to everything.

* * *

Blessed are those who can serve and worship Truth with sincerity and unselfishness. The Divine Mother will always protect them. Why should She not? You know the Lord says in the Gita: "Those who worship me with one-pointed love and with no other thought, I take care of them." Even He looks after their material needs. These things are real and true, and you will realize them more and more as you live the life.

Have faith like a little child, then you will attain the Truth. It is not through reasoning but through faith that we reach It. Little children believe what their parents say unquestioningly; and except we become as

little children, we cannot enter the kingdom of heaven or the kingdom of Truth. Then, too, children run at once to the mother when in danger and do not try to do for themselves, and so must it be with the devotee. Simplicity is the foundation of all religion. When a man becomes grown-up, he sees wickedness; but the little child has no idea of evil. When we grow up, we take the world into our system. We have to give that up and regain our child-like simplicity. Then we enter the kingdom of God.

What makes us wicked? When we forget the Lord and think we are the body. But when we forget our bodily limitations and worship the Lord truly, then quickly we become righteous. This is the only way to liberation, — to forget our limitations and think

of Him only. By thus thinking constantly of Him, every act becomes an act of worship. Mind is like the sky, desires are like clouds, and when they rise over the sky, they hide the sun of wisdom. To keep them from rising, we must hold our mind on Him; then it will be free from all unworthy desire. The more we can hold our Ideal in the heart, the stronger we become. When we can place and keep the Ideal on the altar of our heart, then we shall always live in peace. So we need sincerity, determination and constant thought of the Ideal, if we wish to reach the goal.

* * *

Religion means going steadily forward without heed to success or failure. We must have simple, child-like faith and a pure heart. Nothing else is

necessary. We must always have the Ideal in our mind and we must not get discouraged. Until we have tried, how do we know that we shall not succeed? Going here and there merely to satisfy our curiosity means restlessness and weakness. We must try to be poised, calm, quiet.

Sometimes we grow discouraged and feel inclined to say that there is no God. But have we ever really tried to see Him? Have we even sincerely longed to see Him? If we earnestly try and still do not get a glimpse of Him, then we can say that He does not exist. We must experience these things for ourselves. Our onward journey depends entirely on our own efforts, and it becomes much easier when we create the right atmosphere. By meditation we can create this atmosphere. Most

people do not really want Truth, so they say that they have no time for spiritual practice. They have time for idle gossip, for pleasure, for worldly occupation; but they cannot give even five minutes to God. In this way they deceive themselves and try to deceive God. But those who have a genuine desire for Truth, who have real spiritual hunger, they find time. When you have once tasted the bliss that spiritual thought brings, you cannot give it up. A little nibbling, however, is not enough to satisfy the hunger of the soul. To realize the Truth one must have singleness of purpose and whole-hearted devotion.

Direct perception comes only to a mind which is steady. As long as the mind flickers, it will not come. There may be glimpses of Truth, but

the vision does not remain. Hence it is said, the Truth is not attained until we have conquered our lower nature. Self-mastery and determination are absolutely essential. Firmness is the source of all victory, of all achievement. Strength means happiness, strength means peace. True happiness dawns in our hearts only when we feel ourselves strong. Unhappiness always means weakness, whether we know it or not.

* * *

Truth is ever present in the heart, but only a few possess the purity and perseverance necessary to perceive It. Hence it is said that many are called but few are chosen. "Among thousands of human beings, scarcely one strives for perfection; and among (the thousands of) faithful strivers after

perfection, scarcely one knows Me in reality." Why is this? Because, although there may be many who strive, they do not persevere. Their own nature and tendencies drag them aside out of the path. But a few, one among thousands, persist. They persevere even unto death and they attain. They would rather die than betray Truth. That conviction one needs to realize the Truth.

When you worship or pray, no special forms are necessary. Know that the real thing needful is to have true devotion in your heart. When you have that, it does not matter whether you repeat any *mantram* (holy text) or not; it is always accepted by God. What can we give to the Lord? The whole universe belongs to Him already. But if we can only offer our heart's

love and devotion, then alone we worship Him. Otherwise, when we do not have true love and devotion, no amount of offering can please Him. Say plain, simple prayers from your heart and offer the flowers of love and devotion at the feet of your Ideal. I am sure this will help you more than any observance of outer forms. Always pray to Him for strength and purity, so that you may be able to serve and worship Him truly.

Purity, loyalty, perseverance, fearlessness, these are the necessary things to enable us to worship the Lord.

* * *

God is infinite. No creed, doctrine, dogma, name, form or ritual can ever limit the limitless Being. It does not matter how we worship Him as long as we are genuine and sincere in our feeling for Him. Religion is

not in theory. God is too great to be confined in any theory or belief. The only place He can manifest fully is in the pure heart.

True God-vision comes when we see Him everywhere, when we see Him in all and not merely in one creed or Scripture. When we perceive God only in one place or one thing, that vision is fleeting; but a true knower of God sees Him everywhere, so his awakening is steadfast. He indeed is blessed who can see God in everything and that man alone is religious. So long as we see two, we do not know how to perceive the great Cosmic Power that underlies all things. Seeing the same in everything is perfection.

I care not where the spiritual flower grows, whether in the East or in the West; it will have the same beauty and

fragrance and give the same joy to whoever comes near it. So a spiritual being is the same whether in East or West; he will radiate the same Truth and beauty and holiness wherever he may be.

Whenever we reach the heart of an individual or of a nation, therein we find something which is neither individual nor national, but universal. It is the same heart, but it beats differently in different nations. Truth is ever the same, though its outer manifestations may vary.

Our duty is to harmonize, to sympathize, but never to antagonize. Sometimes it may take long to make people understand a great Ideal; but patience, perseverance and love conquer everything in the end. It is good to give people joy and happiness; but it is

infinitely greater to be able to help them through the light of understanding, because the light of Truth saves one from many rounds of birth and death and gives eternal bliss.

May our thoughts transcend all physical limitations. May we find our joy and highest happiness in Truth. May everything inspire us to acquire Truth. May we remain firm in our concentration on Truth. May nothing discourage us. May our whole life be sanctified by devotion to Truth. May Truth illumine our hearts. May we choose the Truth for our goal, for our strength and our support. May our life be based on Truth and on nothing else.

THE PATH OF THE SPIRIT

Giving up all thoughts of pleasure and pain, gain or loss, worship God day and night, not a moment is to be lost in vain.

Harmlessness, truthfulness, purity, mercy and godliness are always to be kept.

Giving up all other thoughts, the whole mind, day and night, worships God. Thus being worshipped day and night, He reveals Himself and makes His worshippers feel Him.

NÂRADA-BHAKTI-SUTRAS

As a lamp does not burn without oil, so man cannot live without God. Like unto a miser that longeth after gold, let thy heart pant after Him. Verily, I say unto thee, who longs for Him, finds Him. Go and verify this in thine own life; try for three consecutive days with genuine earnestness and thou art sure to succeed.

SRI RÂMAKRISHNA

Fill thy mind with Me (the Lord), be thou My devotee, worship Me and bow down to Me; thus, steadfastly uniting thy heart with Me alone and regarding Me as thy Supreme Goal, thou shalt come unto Me.

BHAGAVAD-GITA

II

THE PATH OF THE SPIRIT

PRAYER

O LORD! Supreme Ruler of the Universe!
Thou art the only One to be known.
Thou art the only One to be worshipped.
Thou art the only One to be realized.
May our thoughts ever turn to Thee.
May we learn to behold Thy glory and fill our whole being with Thy consciousness.
Grant unto us strength and firmness in our spiritual life.
Teach us how to follow the path of righteousness with steadfast devotion.
Protect us from all imperfections and dangers.

May Thy peace and blessings abide with us in all our thoughts, words and actions.

Realization of the Supreme is the goal and we are all going towards that goal. But as we follow the path, we are too often led away by temptations and stop to enjoy this or that; so we lose time. Those, however, who have true devotion and discrimination, walk steadily onward and never stop until they reach the goal.

Until we go to our real home with the Divine Mother we are not safe. This universe is very dangerous. We may think we are safe, but how often are we carried away by our senses and follow them blindly. Whole-hearted devotion to the Ideal is most necessary if we would avoid the dangers in the

path. By living the life we get certain powers. If we pay attention to these and turn our thoughts away from the Ideal, that is like stopping by the way-side and we may not reach the goal. But the true disciple will not stop. He knows that he must go home without delay, otherwise he may be overtaken by storm or evening may come and hide the way.

Under no circumstances must we sacrifice the spiritual life. It can be lived silently, more silently than any other kind of life. No one need know what we think of our Ideal; as Sri Râmakrishna used to sing:

"O my Soul! do thou clasp to thy heart my Beloved Mother.
Let thou and me alone have the privilege of looking on Her;
Let Her be seen by none else, by none else!"

which means that the spiritual life need not be lived with any noise or with any outward show. It can all be kept hidden in the heart.

* * *

The path of the spirit is so simple that a child can walk in it; but grown-up people, who have complicated minds, for them the path is as sharp as the blade of a razor. The simple-minded are ever protected by the Divine Mother and She creates such an atmosphere about them that nothing can touch them. Everyone can acquire this atmosphere. Whatever you really want, you can gain. The power is within you. But you cannot do it if you take the egotistic point of view. If, however, you surrender to Divine Mother and pray to Her with whole-hearted devotion, then

nothing can prevent you from moving onward. You are sure to attain.

What you want is the living quality in the spiritual life. You must be spiritually living before you can enjoy life. You must know what life is. You must have a full consciousness of its meaning and purpose, so that even when things go wrong you will be able to stand up and face the difficulty like a true child of God. You must go round and round your being. You must penetrate into every corner with the light of wisdom, so that nothing is hidden from you. You must arise, awake and shake off all lethargy.

Then when you begin to live, everything will begin to live for you. As long as you are spiritually dead, as long as your heart is deadened by thinking constantly of matter, everything

must seem dead to you. But as soon as you are living, living things will come to you. Whenever the soil is ready, the seed comes; so when your heart is properly prepared and ready to receive the living seed, the life-giving force then it will surely come. You cannot expect someone else to give you a beautiful vision of blessedness. He might do it, but you could not keep it. You must prepare the field by earnestness, humility, child-like simplicity and faith.

You must also yourself long for the spiritual life. You must attune your whole being to spiritual things. You must feel the thirst of the soul and try to satisfy it. Whatever uplifts your heart and thought, you must strive to make that a part of your being. Then you must practise purity, you must practise perseverance and you must

practise meditation. If you practise these steadily, they will become second nature to you. Those who have the habit of spiritual practice, they cannot do without it. They starve if they do not have it.

Just as restless and eager as we are now on the physical plane, so restless and eager must we be on the spiritual plane. We make so much sacrifice for things which are ephemeral, why should we not make a little sacrifice for what is eternal? We are ready to do so much for this body, why should we not do as much for our soul?

He who makes his first and last thought God, he lives in God. He who makes his first and last thought this flesh, what becomes of him? He will be buried deeper and deeper in matter. All who are born must die. Death is

inevitable. But there are some who die for the sake of this body; let us not follow in their footsteps. There are others who die for the sake of God; let us follow them. It is through His Presence alone that the soul finds its satisfaction. The hunger and thirst of the soul none else can satisfy. Only when it stands face to face with the Supreme, then alone is it freed from all imperfections and for the first time tastes true happiness.

We must, however, take care of this body, because it is a shrine, a temple of God. So it must be preserved, but not for the sake of itself. And a light must be kept burning in that shrine. When through meditation we have kindled the soul-nature within us, then the light will come.

* * *

The spiritual life requires great concentration, for it is concentration that creates the right atmosphere. If you hold hateful or evil thoughts, you create an evil atmosphere; similarly, when your mind is fixed on holy things, even if you are not trying to create a holy atmosphere, you do create it and others feel it. Whenever you gather all your heart and soul together to accomplish anything, it is accomplished. You surround yourself with an atmosphere of that, your internal and external nature become attuned with the Source of all things and you cannot fail to succeed.

But this can only be done when you have full possession of your mind. Few people really possess a whole mind. They have only fragments. Their mind does not belong to them; it is

claimed by so many things. They have no control over it. Those, however, who are able to offer themselves wholly to the Supreme Ideal, they have complete possession of their mind. Mind is a power. When it constantly thinks of the phenomenal world and divides itself in pieces, it is never strong. But when you are able to control it, when you can take and place it where you will, then it belongs to you, you possess it and you can use it to attain your freedom. Great souls have absolute mastery over their minds, so they can give them wholly to God. What they have done, you can do.

The Bhagavad-Gita says: "The well-resolved mind is single and one-pointed." So it is with a seeker of Truth. He thinks of nothing else. He moves in that, he lives in that, his

whole being is based on that, and he becomes that. You may ask: What happens to his ordinary life? Does a wise man eat, sleep, work? Yes; he eats, sleeps and performs all his functions, but he knows that his soul is immortal and he lives with that consciousness. An ordinary mortal recognizes disease, bondage, suffering; but one who has soul-consciousness, he does not recognize these; he recognizes God. He lives like other men; but he is free, while the other is bound. You may put him in a dark dungeon, there he finds an effulgent light within himself. You cannot rob him of his light. You do not need to help him, he finds all his help in the Supreme. You say the most condemning things, they do not touch him.

Who is the stronger? The one who

is not touched. He lives in an atmosphere which no one can break through. He lives on an island so isolated, no one can reach him. He dwells in a state which can never be disturbed. His inner consciousness is peace and that inner bliss he possesses is his own. You may have a beautiful room, decorate it with flowers and do everything to have peace there; but it is not so safe as when you have peace and bliss within yourself. You may have to leave that special place; but the inner shrine you can carry with you wherever you go. That sanctuary which you create within yourself by your thoughts, words and actions, nothing can take away.

* * *

There are also living shrines, there are living gods. But they are not

fixed in one spot. No; they encircle a vaster region. They have created such an atmosphere of purity and peace that their every word, their every thought, their very existence brings peace and blessedness. They carry the atmosphere of God wherever they go and people find blessing just from their presence. Nor are these isolated exceptions. What they have done, you can do and everyone can do. The wise who know, who have realized these things for themselves, they say it can be done. There is not a mortal so defective in his spiritual possibilities, not one so poor in his spiritual power, that he cannot do this.

A true teacher is like a fountain that goes on and on, and people come with little tumblers, pitchers, pails, but they can never exhaust the fountain,

for God's power is inexhaustible. Lecturing and talking, however, are the smallest part of his work. The main thing is to sow the seed Those who are ready feel the living quality of it just from the presence without words. Words express very little, but the spirit is felt in the core of the heart.

The company of holy and pure souls is the greatest help in the spiritual life. They alone can give you true rest and courage if you grow weary on the way. The real saints, the unselfish pure characters are like the spring. As at the touch of spring new life comes to all things, so these teachers, wherever they go, carry the atmosphere of purity and holiness and bring new life and strength. Having themselves crossed the ocean of *Samsâra* or worldliness, they help others to cross it, without thought of

receiving any return, but just because they love to do good. A saintly character, one who lives here for the sake of others, radiates everywhere cheerfulness, light and blessing.

Those who keep their life pure, who live in pure thought, they are always cheerful. The sign of spiritual progress is cheerfulness. A man who is truly spiritual is always full of bliss. When we begin to feel this, we may know that we are advancing. Whoever finds his light within is ever blissful.

* * *

O child of God! Arise! Awake! Why sleep so long? Sleep no more. He who finds the Limitless, he alone is happy. The great ones tell you that you are the possessor of infinite strength and are sure to overcome all difficulties, that you are sure to realize. There-

fore seek the Lord with your whole heart. Never grow discouraged. Never give up. Feel the reality of the spiritual life. Make your call upon God so earnest and sincere that He will hear you and bring within you so clear a vision of the Divine that even in great sorrow you will never forget Him.

Strive and never give up. This is the whole secret of success in the spiritual life.

THE CONSECRATED LIFE

He who hates no creature and is friendly and compassionate to all, who is free from attachment and egotism, equal-minded in pleasure and pain, and forgiving, who is ever content and meditative, self-subjugated and possessed with firm conviction, with mind and intellect dedicated to Me, he who is thus devoted to Me is dear to Me.

BHAGAVAD-GITA

The Divine voice of thunder repeats the same, Da, Da, Da, (Dâmyata, Datta, Dayadham); that is, Subdue the self, Give, Be compassionate.

BRIHADÂRANYAKA-UPANISHAD

Him I call indeed a Brâhmana (one of consecrated life) whose knowledge is deep, who possesses wisdom, who knows the right way and the wrong; who has traversed this miry road, the world, difficult to pass, and its vanity; who is thoughtful, steadfast, free from doubts, free from attachment and content.

THE DHAMMAPADA

If the thoughts of a man were so fixed on Brahman (God) as they are on the things of this world, who then would not be free from bondage.

MAITRÂYANA-BRÂHMANA-UPANISHAD

III

THE CONSECRATED LIFE

PRAYER

O Lord, I do not want wealth.
I do not want power.
I do not want the fleeting happiness of this mortal world.
Grant only that this body, mind and heart be consecrated wholly to Thy will:
That all my thoughts, all my desires, every part of me, be dedicated to Thy service;
That I may find my delight and supreme happiness in Thee;
That I may remain firm in my devotion to Thee;

That my thoughts and prayers be so unselfish that they may reach Thee;
That my heart be so full of love for every human being that it may never entertain any unworthy feeling.
Grant me this, O Supreme Being, Thou who art the Giver of all.
Protect me from every selfish thought and action.
Grant unto all living creatures Thy peace!

WHEN we realize that we have desired so much in this life and gained so little, then the spirit of renunciation comes. Desires are the cause of all our suffering. So long as we have any selfish desire whatever, we shall have to live in the world of variety; but the wise man realizes that this is perishable and

gives it up. So long as a man is hungry he will ask for food. Only when his hunger is satisfied will he refuse it. So, as long as a man is hungry for the world, as long as he has desire, he clings to the things of the world; but when his hunger is satisfied, then he is ready and glad to give it up and the life of consecration begins for him.

Worldly men think that the religious man is foolish; but they will grow and change. If the child asks how sugar tastes, you cannot describe it; he will have to taste it for himself. So that state beyond desire is indescribable and you will have to taste it for yourself to know what is. The Seers of Truth may tell you what is to be seen and felt in that state; but only as you have experienced it for yourself, can you know what it really is. Each must have his

own experience. We cannot learn from the experience of others.

It is true that when we try to lead an ideal life of absolute devotion and renunciation, we have to go through many trials in the form of criticism and condemnation from the world; but also is it true that the joy one feels in the spiritual life, even in the midst of all external suffering, is infinitely greater than any pleasure that the world can give us. So we should discriminate and stand by the Ideal, whatever may happen to us.

We must never be influenced by what others say. One blind man can never lead another blind man. So our safest path is to follow those great lights who have attained illumination, and not the voice of the world. These two always conflict. As it is said in the

Bhagavad-Gita: "That which is night to all beings, therein the self-subjugated remains awake; and in that where all beings are awake, that is night for the knower of Self."

Let us build our characters in silence. We need not proclaim our goodness or greatness. We need not say what we are. If we live in a cave and think one good thought, that will penetrate some heart and bring a blessing. A true saint must be known, not by his words, but by his actions. When we lead a truly consecrated life, we change, even the physical particles of our body change, and the same mind and the same body, which so often did wrong, can now do only good. Then we become perfect instruments in the hands of the Lord and our every step will be a blessing to humanity. But to attain this state, we

must have earnestness, humility and Bhakti or devotion.

Humility is the first thing necessary in the spiritual life. So long as we think that we know anything, we are not ready to learn; but when we realize that we know nothing and throw ourselves at the feet of one who is pure and selfless, then we learn.

* * *

Unselfishness should be our constant Ideal, whether we are able to follow it successfully or not. It should be a burning passion in our hearts, for unselfishness is one of the greatest purifiers. We must struggle as long as life remains in the body. That is all we can do; what right have we to the fruits of our actions?

It is not possible to serve the Lord or his children unless we are thoroughly

unselfish. However difficult this may seem in the beginning, we must not grow discouraged and abandon the Ideal. The state of selflessness is only attained through constant struggle with the lower self; and even if we fail a hundred times, that should not crush us, but like good soldiers we should get up with fresh vigor and struggle on. Determination and perseverance enable us to transcend the limitations of the ego and attain final victory.

It is always a very great pity when people miss an opportunity for higher things out of thoughtlessness or weakness. But everything depends on Her will and grace. Bondage and freedom both are in the Divine Mother's hands. Those who pray humbly and earnestly, theirs is the kingdom of God. Egotism lends no access there. It only

prevents our going to that blissful abode. As long as this demon in the form of ego rules in us, so long all our striving for spiritual things proves fruitless. I am understanding more and more every day why all great sages laid such stress on this: "Man has no other enemy than his ego." It is absolutely true. When this great enemy is conquered, then alone one realizes how majestic the soul is.

All our limitations and sorrows, all our littleness and imperfections arise from this one source. It is the absence of ego which fills our hearts with purity, humility, love, peace and all blessed qualities. Through the grace of the Divine may we taste the nectar of *Ânandam* (bliss) to be found in this egoless state. May we realize in all our undertakings that it is the Lord's

work. That we are carrying out His will, not ours; that all we are doing is what He is doing through us. May our understanding never be clouded, but may it enable us to see that He is the only Doer and that all happens by His will.

* * *

We must have strength, we must have energy to work; but we must decide whether we want to work for what is fleeting or for something permanent. Where our treasure is, there our heart will be. Let us make it our earnest prayer to God to give us wisdom and strength to follow ably what is best for our welfare and for the welfare of those who depend on us. This world cannot prove dangerous when our heart is steadfastly fixed on God. When we turn our thought to Him

with real strength and conviction, then no harm can come to us. But without love of God and His mercy life is altogether unsafe and full of peril. Pray to Him earnestly for light and try to do your duties with non-attachment. Strive to keep your body, mind and heart harmonious. Practise purity and self-control in all your thoughts, words and actions. This will give you peace.

Every good act inspires one for another. Things constantly change in this world, but the memory remains; and the memory of an unselfish, noble act brings great strength and consolation to the soul. A true devotee really enjoys pain when he can relieve someone by taking it on himself. He is only afraid to give pain to others; but he loves to take pain on himself, if by so doing he can bring peace and happi-

ness to another. This is the way the sincere devotee always feels and always tries to act.

* * *

Let your earnest prayer be that all your association and contact with life may bring you strength and inspiration for your work, and that you may find peace even in the midst of great difficulties. Difficulties and dangers are bound to come to all, but those who meet them calmly and bravely, they grow stronger for them; while those who give way and succumb to them, they are always miserable.

No work was ever accomplished without meeting with opposition, and it is indeed a great blessing when we receive blows. If there is anything real in a man, he cannot help but bring it out then; for a noble soul is noble

under all circumstances. Unless we can absolutely give up all our feelings and opinions, we are bound to meet with opposition. Where is the remedy? The remedy is in ourselves; it is in our own sincere conviction and purity of life. Nothing else can give us the fearlessness which comes through the practice of unselfishness. Purity cannot be without unselfishness. Let us therefore try to serve truly, knowing that all power comes through true service. Let us make it our constant prayer at His Divine feet that we may prove ourselves exemplary characters and a blessing to all those who come near us.

TRUST IN THE DIVINE

He who seeks refuge with Me even once, surrendering himself wholly with the thought "Thine am I," to him do I secure protection from all harmful beings. This is my promise. RÂMÂYÂNA

Wise men, having found a sure refuge in Thee, cross over the dreadful ocean of *Samsâra* (worldliness), the abode of endless suffering.

MAHÂBHÂRATA

Salutation unto Thee Who severest the fetters of ignorance of humble refugees like me. Thou art the Source of emancipation, the inexhaustible Fountain of mercy. Thou art ever active. It is Thou Who art seated in the hearts of all beings, directing their thoughts and actions according to their Karma. Thee, O Great God, I salute!

SRIMAD-BHÂGAVATA

Seeking for emancipation, I go for refuge to that God Who is the Guiding Light to the understanding of all souls.

SVETÂSVATARA-UPANISHAD

O Bhârata, take refuge in Him with all thy heart; through His Grace thou shalt attain Supreme Peace and the Eternal Abode.

BHAGAVAD-GITA

IV

TRUST IN THE DIVINE

PRAYER

MAY our hearts become firmly fixed in the Divine, the Giver of all blessings, the very thought of Whom destroys all evil;
Whose Presence brings blessing and illumination to the soul;
Whose Name removes all sorrows and gives to the soul true peace and rest.
May our thoughts be focused on the One without a second, the only Reality of this universe.
May He be the object of our worship.
May He be the object of our devotion.
May we find our refuge in Him.

May our trust in Him ever remain
unshaken.

God's work no mortal can resist. That is what you must be conscious of all the time. Often the task before you may seem like cutting a road through rocks; but remember that everything is possible through His will and grace. Be brave and stand by your post faithfully. The Lord will bless you and give you strength. Trust in Him and all will go well. Try to do each task with masterly spirit and calmness and do not let things wear you out. Try and the Lord will help you.

Be patient; everything is conquered through patience and perseverance. The Supreme Being is always protecting you. He will make you able and strong. Always place your faith and heart on

the Divine, the only true Protector. Through His Grace everything is possible and without His Grace all our efforts are of no avail.

In Him must we trust; in none else, in none else. Our faith in Him and love for Him must make us immovable. Impatience, planning or any human effort is not the characteristic of a true devotee. He is our guide and we must get all our support from Him. In the face of every difficulty we must look to Him for peace and understanding. True devotees alone are fearless and all-blissful. No one can be fearless who has a doubting mind. Everything goes well when we feel His presence. He is the sun, the dispel er o all darkness and clouds of sorrow. What is there to fear in this world so long as we do not forget

Him, being led away by worldly thoughts?

All the great teachers have taught us the path of child-like faith and simplicity, where there is no more vanity, no more ego, but complete dependence on the Divine. Surrendering the heart, soul and body to God's work, to God's will, this is the way of bliss

All are guided by His will. Should we not therefore recognize Him above all things? Should we not offer all our prayers and all our thoughts to Him? At least our first thought and our last thought of every day should be for Him. Our gratitude above all should be offered for His Grace. He is all-pervading, He is all-mighty, He is the Giver of all blessings. Him alone we recognize and pray to for our guidance and protection. May we through His

Grace realize our Divine nature; may we feel the awakening of That without which nothing exists, That which is the source of our life, our true source of existence, That to which we must look for strength, for guidance, for all our inspiration.

Through His blessing may our remembrance of Him be constant and perpetual. May we succeed in directing our thoughts towards Him without interruption or disturbance. May we perform all our duties in this life carrying Him with us wherever we go. May we address all our prayers to Him, for He never fails to hear the prayers of His beloved children. We have no other power or right to do, except to pray to Him like little children. The rest depends on Him fully.

* * *

Never let anyone rule over you but God. Let your mind be fixed on Him and do not care what may be the outward changes in your life. We must learn never to place our faith on human help, but on Him only. What can poor mortals do? Their power is so limited; they are the slaves of nature. Serve the Lord and do His work. He will take care of the rest. Truth alone shines, not falsehood. Untruth may be triumphant for a limited time, but its triumph cannot last.

Be bold under all circumstances. If any difficulty comes in your way, face it, having intense faith in Divine Mother. Take everything calmly and act wisely. Doubting, quarrelling and all such things are very unworthy. When we hold such thoughts and try to defend ourselves by fighting or dis-

puting with our opponents, we drop down to their level and forget the protecting hand of our All-Blissful Mother. We must learn to forgive, that gives us strength. Only the narrow-minded cannot forgive. Those who forgive are like an ocean. Do not forget for a moment that we are all Her children, good or bad, all Her children. If She does not protect, there is no other power that can save us; and when She protects, there is no power that can do any harm to us. Strength is religion, so be careful not to be weak.

Beloved Soul, you have nothing to fear in this world. You are the child of the Mother of the Universe. She guides you always by holding your hand, and She alone knows how to protect Her children. Where then can there be any danger for those who trust in

Her? If any anxiety comes to your heart, directly appeal to the Mother, for we have no voice independent of Her will.

Be a true devotee, full of trust, full of hope, full of love and of godly powers.

Divine Mother will always protect you and give you strength for Her work. You have only to stand ready to do Her will. She knows Her own and when she attracts no power can resist. Blessed are they who are attracted by Her, for those who take refuge at Her blessed feet never need worry under any circumstances. Even when dangers come from all sides like thick clouds, if we do not forget Her and patiently bear everything, then we find it true that She can make almost the most impossible things pos-

sible for the protection of Her devoted children. There is no other power that can make us suffer. She is the only power in this universe.

O Thou Supreme One! Increase our faith and trust in Thee. Teach us complete surrender to Thy will. Choose us as Thine own. Grant unto us Thy blessing and protection and peace.

THE SERVICE OF THE IDEAL

Bhakti is intense love for God (or the Ideal); getting which, man becomes perfect, immortal and satisfied forever; getting which, man desires no more, does not become jealous of anything, does not take pleasure in vanities; knowing which, man becomes filled with spirituality, becomes calm and finds pleasure only in God. . . . Nârada gives these as the signs of love: "When all thoughts, all words, and all deeds are given up unto the Lord, and the least forgetfulness of God makes one intensely miserable, then love has begun."

NÂRADA-BHAKTI-SUTRAS

O Lord! O Imperishable One! In whatever thousands of births I may wander, may my undying love be always in Thee. VISHNU-PURÂNA

Do Thou light in my heart a burning faith, that like the pole-star is ever a sure and infallible guide. O Thou Friend of the weak, do Thou fulfil this my only desire. Thus lost in the Infinite Bliss of Thy love, I shall forget myself entirely, having Thee as mine own all day and night.

BENGALEE HYMN

V

THE SERVICE OF THE IDEAL

PRAYER

May we learn through His grace not to waste our energies by serving the unreal, the non-essential, but to serve Him, Who is our true Friend, our true Guide, our true Protector.

May we learn through His grace to withdraw our minds and hearts from the vain search after pleasure and turn our whole thought towards Him.

May our constant thought of Him sanctify our hearts and bring purity and tranquillity within us.

May we learn to be faithful to Him

in all our thoughts, in all our words and in all our actions.

May our faith and devotion be unfaltering.

May we never forget the One towards Whom we are going and in Whom alone we can find rest and satisfaction.

May our senses, mind and heart, may all our activities, conscious or unconscious, become silent and ready to listen to His voice.

May we serve Him with steadfastness, humility and one-pointed devotion.

NOTHING gives greater joy and satisfaction than to serve the Ideal with devotion, loyalty and unfailing selflessness. If you are a true disciple, all blessed qualities must grow stronger and stronger in you every day and

the world will learn through you what real devotion to the Ideal means. All the power that manifests through you will come from that source. Open the channel for it through constant loving service, humility and devotion. Then it will flow steadily and the current will grow mightier and mightier every day, so that everyone who comes in contact with it will be blessed with the true spirit of discipleship.

The world is so full of teachers, everyone wants to be a master; but the spirit of discipleship is indeed very rare. Pray to Divine Mother to make you unflinching in your devotion and life. Honor, praise, recognition can be great drawbacks to the soul. They awaken the subtle ego and prevent our spiritual progress. God alone can protect us from such dangers. All glory

must go to Him. Offer all the honor, respect and love that you receive from people at His Divine feet; then you will never create any bondage for yourself. This is the secret. Do not forget this and you will never make any mistake. If you thus glorify your Ideal by your life, you will be blessed more and more every day and bring spiritual blessing to many.

The great secret in serving a noble Ideal is to overcome all thoughts of credit and discredit; they are very, very limiting. Also to rise above the thought of success and failure. Through constant service with love and devotion and through His grace we become endowed with all noble virtues. But do not ever forget that we must be genuine. Those who serve Him truly, no harm can ever come to them. The

greatest thing in life is to be able to dedicate our lives to Him and be used by Him as He wills. This is true freedom and peace.

If you have unwavering faith in your Ideal and serve Him truly, God will bless you and many others will get blessing through you. Then no harm can come to you. It does not matter at all whether others praise you or condemn you. If you have been blessed by Him and by those who represent Him, you have nothing more to gain. What else is there to covet if you have the jewel of devotion to God and His blessings? Then your life must grow richer, more blissful every day, and feelings of joy will pour out spontaneously from your inner being.

Happiness and strength come when we remain steady under all circum-

stances. This is a great lesson which everyone needs to learn. Unless we are strong and steady we can never serve truly. We must go through different conditions of life to make ourselves perfect characters. This is absolutely necessary, and without this no true character is ever formed.

* * *

Always hold your position in life with dignity and selflessness. Know that you are a channel through which the Ideal is manifesting. Keep yourself pure and one-pointed in your devotion, then there will be no difficulty. Give yourself wholly to Him, your body, mind, heart, with all their power and possibilities. Let nothing ever distract your mind. Be an ideal devotee, an ideal disciple. Never forget that our indebtedness to our Master is

incalculable. We can never do enough for Him and His cause. To please Him by our life is the greatest thing that we can do. To displease Him by thought, word or action is our greatest misfortune.

Strive always to represent the Ideal in your life. Remember that our mistakes and unwise acts often throw a shadow on our Ideal. Therefore how careful we ought to be to mould our characters in such a way that we may never hurt the Ideal or give any wrong impression of It. Be always careful and pray to God that no anxiety or disappointment may come through you. Surrender yourself entirely to Him; then there will be no danger, for His blessings will abide with you and protect you from every imperfection and danger.

No one can serve the Ideal without loyalty, one-pointed love and steadfast devotion. Praise, honor and too much success often make us vain and we forget to do our duty towards our Ideal. The vain man is never happy; but they who are meek and gentle, humble and faithful know what true happiness means. Try to be unselfish and serve the Master, forgetting all personal comforts and convenience. When true love comes, we do not demand anything from the one we love, but we give everything freely and get all joy from doing so. Love for love's sake. No more slavery, but freedom and bliss.

There is nothing like genuine love in this world. It can accomplish everything and nothing is impossible before it. Love is life and in lack of it every-

thing becomes dead. The power of devotion is wonderful. How it opens all the possibilities of our knowledge! This is the only way to attain true vision.

* * *

The Lord says in the Gita that "Well-doers never go through any real suffering." This may not always seem to be true, since good people from the worldly standpoint often seem to suffer more than others, but they do not suffer from ignorance. So the Lord means: "I give them light, so they never really suffer." He who is a sincere and steadfast lover of Truth is indeed blessed. Such a one only can have the spirit of a true disciple and serve his Ideal faithfully.

Keep your eyes ever fixed on the Ideal, then you will tread the path of life

quite safely and happily. Nothing else can give us true happiness and peace. Momentary pleasures always bring suffering as their reaction and we feel weakened by them. Pray from the bottom of your heart that you may always remain untouched by the world. Be a true devotee, an ideal character; then all peace, happiness and success will be yours. What is the use of being ordinary? If you exemplify your Ideal through your character, then your life will be enriched with all nobility, strength, purity and everything that distinguishes us from the ordinary type. You will grow more powerful every day, get hold of greater things and thus attain the highest glory.

Real love should always bring strength and I know it does. You should never try to drag down the Ideal through

weakness. That is not true love. Stand as a tower of strength. Death is not death when we can die serving our Ideal. Blessed are those who can sacrifice their lives for the sake of the Ideal. There is no greater work. Pray to Him to give you strength and true love. Pray to Him that you may serve Him truly.

PURITY OF HEART

Let a man strive to purify his thoughts. Dwelling within his (Divine) Self with serene thoughts, he obtains imperishable bliss. . . . That happiness which belongs to a mind which by deep meditation has been washed clean from all impurity and has entered within the Self cannot be described by words, it can be felt by the inward power only.

MAITRÂYANA-BRÂHMANA-UPANISHAD

Having realized Him (the Supreme) by means of superior austerity and with a pure mind and heart, the sage will never again approach death. Hence the wise declare the act of "surrendering one's self to the Lord" to be higher than all austerities.

TAITTIRIYA-UPANISHAD

He is the Soul of all creatures, seated in the heart of all embodied beings, He is the Ruler of all creation, and all creatures become one in Him.

YAJURVEDA-ÂRANYAKA

That Supreme Brahman, the Self of all, the great Abode of the universe, subtler than the subtle, the Eternal, That is thyself and thou art That.

KAIVÂLYA-UPANISHAD

VI

PURITY OF HEART

PRAYER

O Supreme Deity, Mother of the moving and unmoving, come, manifest Thyself to us.

Thou art nameless, formless, but Thou comest when there is the genuine call. That call Thou answerest.

Thou art the Giver of all blessing, of all understanding.

Thou art the origin of all. Thou art all.

Through Thy grace the dumb become eloquent, the lame run.

Thou art the only Doer.

Give us strength, purity and inspiration.

Teach us how to surrender to Thee, how
to call Thee.
Thou art the Supreme Lord.
Thou art the Source of all Bliss.
Manifest Thyself to us. Come to us.
Make Thy Divine Presence felt in our
hearts.
Grant unto us Thy peace and blessing.

Everything is conquered by the strength of a pure, unselfish character. When you have purity and unselfishness, nothing more is necessary to bring wisdom. There is naught else in this universe which can give more quickly peace and light to the soul than purity of body and thought; as also there is nothing more potent than impurity to bring the gloom of unhappiness over the soul. This has always been the same. It is the inevitable law. Truth

is one and unchangeable. It needs boldness to realize It, worship It and stand by It. Know this and be irresistible with the spirit of Truth and purity.

Know that in the long run Truth must succeed; it cannot be otherwise. Divine Mother's will is going to guide and not the human. Let people exercise their powers and have their experience. But those who are pure in heart, they alone will see the Divine glory. There is nothing like purity; its power is wonderful. Through it one gets almost unlimited vision. But it is very hard to gain. Always value this rare jewel and guard it with all your might. But this is only possible for one who prays constantly to the Supreme Being and has obtained His mercy. Pray with humility and sincerity of heart, then you will never fail.

Remember always that purity and self-control are the greatest treasures in life. Unless you have perfect control over the senses and purity of heart you cannot progress in the path of spirituality. But when you have these, nothing can hurt you or resist you. Always be watchful and pray to the Divine Mother to keep you spotless from all worldliness and egotism. Look to Her for help and guidance. She will make you strong and pure and inspire you more and more with Her Power. So long as Her love and blessings surround you, you are safe.

Self-control is gained through the practice of non-attachment. Attachment is a habit and can be overcome by forming a new habit. Hundreds of times you may fail, but you know that unless you learn control you cannot

have peace. So practice needs patience. You must struggle continually until you become perfect. You must start just where you are standing now. You must not complain but begin where you are and move onward and onward. Even though you fail thousands of times, you must still struggle to overcome those desires and passions which disturb the lake of your mind and do not let you see your Divine Self at the bottom. Do not think that when you fail, all that you have gained is lost. No; each time you rise after failure, you acquire fresh strength.

Do not be in a hurry; all that you have within will manifest itself in time. Work in moderation. Moderation is the only way to gain health, happiness and peace. When you observe this,

then all your efforts will be crowned with success.

* * *

Whatever you do, it all depends upon the atmosphere which you create. The first thing you need is to create a pure atmosphere both within and without. There must not be any wrong or disturbing element. You must have such surroundings as will inspire you, as will bring out the best in you. And this is especially so with the spiritual life, because it is more subtle. It needs absolutely one-pointed devotion, for it is that which creates the right atmosphere. This is the meaning of all churches and temples; it is to have a place where the atmosphere is such that, when we go there, it will elevate us. Why do we sit in silence? Why do we chant holy texts? It creates an

atmosphere of purity and peace which helps us to uplift our thoughts.

At first you may find it hard to remain fixed in your practice; but the more you try, the more you will gain ground. No one can be religious without practising non-attachment. A true saint gives up both heavenly and earthly pleasures, and this is the first step towards being religious. If you throw your anchor into the water, you may pull your boat but it will not move and you merely waste your energy. So if you anchor yourself by attachment to the body and external things, no matter how hard you try, you cannot advance spiritually.

Yet even association with worldly life may help you by showing you more clearly the value of the spiritual life, and also by giving you knowledge

through which you may help others. Everything depends on our attitude and motive; and when they are right and unselfish, we are perfectly safe.

* * *

May the Divine Mother so bless us that we may never bring anything but happiness, sunshine and peace wherever we go. May She make us so strong and pure-minded that we shall always be a joy and comfort to all those who come near us. This is a state which we get through the practice of purity and unselfishness, as they know through experience who have tried to live the contemplative life. We can never forget that which gives us a glimpse of the Real. The inner life in which we find the greatest joy and bliss is the real religion, for religion means the unfoldment of our Divine nature. I am sure

that through the great blessings of the Mother that shrine is open to you. Enter there, pure Soul, with all love, devotion and reverence; worship day and night and thus become free from all imperfection.

It is the power of purity which gives the vision of God. Cannot Buddha or Christ appear to the unawakened? Yes, they can, but they do not wish to create a mango out of an apple seed. They do not wish to act contrary to nature. We must rise to them. God's mercy is on all, but only those who are ready, who have true devotion in their hearts, are able to take it.

Blessed is he whom the Lord has made rich in love and devotion. It is sincerity and self-sacrifice that enable one to receive these gifts. He who has them both may well be called blessed.

Although the Lord is merciful to all beings equally, yet it is impossible to grasp His love and blessings unless you are pure and sincere. May the Divine Mother pour all the choicest blessings on your plant of devotion and enable it to bring out the blossoms of purity and unselfish love and thus attract all through their divine fragrance.

* * *

May our hearts be so pure and calm and serene that they will feel the presence of that One, the Giver of light, the Giver of life, the Source of our existence. May they be so still that our souls may hear the music of the Divine. The ear of the soul is not satisfied by the ordinary sounds of music; it listens for the sound of the Divine music. The lovers of God find bliss in hearing His word; and by sing-

ing His glory they feed the soul. There is no other way to satisfy the hunger and thirst of the soul. Nothing that is human, nothing that is material can give permanent satisfaction; but one touch, one sound in the hour of silence, when all our senses are quiet, when our mind is still, when none dares to move but the Purusha, the Self, the Lord — that brings bliss to the soul. His Presence commands all. All thoughts, all words, all activities are silent through His command. Then alone we hear His voice speaking to the soul. Then alone we see Him shining in the heart. Then we feel His Presence, we touch Him. Then all gross matter, all external things vanish and the soul enjoys Divine ecstasy. But silence must be there without and within to feel His Presence. There must be no discord,

no friction. Man must disappear in humility in recognition of the Divine Being. When by his inner vision he beholds the glory of God, when he sees something grander, more majestic before him and bows down in worship and awe: this is the way God-vision comes to the pure heart.

O Thou Effulgent Being! Lead us by the path of purity. Lead us by the path of righteousness. O God! Let us behold oneness of soul with Thyself. Cleanse our hearts that we may gain a glimpse of the Divinity within us. Give us that purity and holiness which attract the Divine Presence. May all our spiritual practice be so genuine, so spontaneous that through our prayers and thoughts and contemplation we may come unto

Thee and realize our oneness with Thee, our true being and existence in Thee. Let us never be bound. We offer everything at Thy Feet. I and Thou are one.